

The New York Times

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Airlines and Missiles

To the Editor:

You are right that our commercial jets need protection from shoulder-fired missiles (editorial, Aug. 17). Because these weapons can target jets more than 30 miles from an airport, the only viable protections are technologies, now operational on military aircraft, that detect incoming missiles and jam the guidance systems with lasers or light.

Legislation I wrote with Senator Barbara Boxer would pay to retrofit the current fleet of American jets. While the cost estimates that you mention (\$7 billion to \$10 billion to equip 6,800 planes) are accurate based on the current price of these systems, greater production levels and competition are likely to bring the final tally down to a more manageable figure.

In the meantime, Congressional leaders should expedite hearings on our legislation. We cannot afford to wait until after a successful attack to address this danger.

STEVE ISRAEL

Member of Congress, 2nd Dist., N.Y.

Huntington, N.Y., Aug. 17, 2003